

Pueblo Ribera Court
230 Gravilla Street
La Jolla
San Diego County
California

HABS No. CA-1943

HABS
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37-LAJOL,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PUEBLO RIBERA COURT

HABS No. 3-1943

HABS
CAL,
37-LA30L,

Location: 230 Gravilla Street, La Jolla, San Diego County, California.

Present Owner: Michael Tellep (owner of six units on Gravilla Street). Six units facing Playa del Sur Avenue individually owned.

Present Occupants: Michael Tellep and renters.

Present Use: Residence.

Significance: A creative use of site, a unique structural system, one of the early expressions of floor plan in which the garden penetrates the house, i.e., the houses are on slabs, and glass walls open them to patios on the same level. Schindler's play of space forms visually extends these small houses vertically and horizontally.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1923.
2. Architect: R. M. Schindler.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

1923	W. L. Lloyd
1930	Mary L. Wiswall and Hatti A. Denton
1962:	David C. Wiswall et al.
1968	Michael Tellep (acquired title from a quit claim deed). Legal description: La Jolla Strand, Block 5, Lots 47, 48, 49, 50 and 51.
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: Clyde Chase, builder.
5. Original plans and construction: The units in the court are three-room beach cottages with roof terraces and patios. According to the architect, Schindler:

"Architecturally: group planning to avoid the row. By grouping and turning the units each obtains a private patio, and the combination achieves architectural form. Structurally: Slab-cast system: Walls executed in concrete by means of sliding-up form."

6. Alterations and additions: 1941: Schindler designed for one unit an enclosure of roof terrace; subsequently all but three of the cottages have enclosed the roof terrace, none done by architects. In nine cottages the glass wall of the living room has been moved out 6' to widen living room and roof the stairs to the terrace. The wall between kitchen and nook has been removed in all cottages, and the living room hearth has been widened in most. Wood-framed sliding doors have been replaced by steel and glass in one cottage. Numerous minor alterations have been made throughout, especially in kitchens and baths.

Prepared by: Esther McCoy
July 1968

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: The Pueblo Ribera Court, designed by R. M. Schindler and built in 1923, is a unique grouping of 12 vacation units on a site near the Pacific Ocean. Each unit has a private walled garden, the result of rotating and "flopping" the basic house plan. The rooms are arranged for privacy with no windows opening to adjacent units. Private roof terraces are also included in each unit. The buildings are constructed of "slab cast" concrete employing slip forms for economy in erection.
2. Condition and fabric: Due to years of alterations and neglect of certain units, the complex appears run down. However improvements are being made at present. Renewal of materials and general maintenance is now being carried out. The buildings are still structurally sound because of the simplicity of details and type of construction.

B. Detailed Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions of individual unit: 36' x 34'. A 4' module is followed throughout. Each unit is one story with a roof terrace above. Units are "U" shaped around a patio.
2. Foundations: Concrete.
3. Wall construction, finish, color: Major structural walls are "slab cast" concrete with natural color and medium-rough texture.

The sequence of construction: The form work is built of wood and consists of a skeleton of vertical guides and a single continuous course of horizontal wall forms. Vertical guides are 2" thick with beveled edges for stripping. Wall forms (of 2" x 16" boards) slide on outside of guides. The inside of the forms are covered with roofing paper to insure good surface for concrete.

The floor slab is placed and finished; the guides erected; windows and door frames, anchors, reinforcing rods, plumbing pipes, etc. are set between forms; concrete poured; form stripped.

The wall panels between the concrete structural walls are of California redwood with glass.

4. Structural system, framing: Roof joists of 3" x 8" redwood. They support (for the living room roof) a 2" thick concrete slab atop sheathing. The roof of the two side wings have composition roofing atop joists and sheathing. The pergola is constructed of 2" x 8", 2" x 6", and 2" x 4" redwood for the roofs.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: There is a patio opening off the living room of each unit. It measures approximately 22' square and has a concrete slab floor.

The roof terrace (directly over the living room) measures approximately 23' x 20' and has a concrete slab floor.

6. Chimneys: On the narrow end of the living room of each unit is the chimney. It is constructed of formed concrete and the orientation varies with the individual unit.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The door openings between the patio and living rooms are fitted with three sliding doors (4'-0" wide) and one regular hinged door. All are wood frame with 4 horizontal glass panels, one of which (on the sliding doors only) is divided horizontally into two small glass panels.

French doors open between the nook and patio. They resemble the living room doors.

There is a wood door between the utility room and the exterior at the rear of the house.
 - b. Windows: Clerestory windows are placed above the sliding doors of the living room. The bedroom has a vertical strip of glass in one corner. The bathrooms have two small horizontal windows with awning type openings. All these windows are set in wood frames.
8. Stairways: The exterior stairway to the roof terrace has thirteen 8" risers. In most units they are located to the right of the sliding doors in the living room. They are of concrete.

9. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Flat roofs are covered with composition roofing. There is a slight slope for drainage. The roof terrace is concrete slab.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a 2" x 8" redwood fascia for the overhang on the patio side of the living room. The overhang extends 4'. The eaves are of redwood boards also.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: A pergola forms the enclosure over the roof terrace.

A parapet encircles the house and becomes a railing for the roof terrace, thus adding to the privacy of that area.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Plans: All 12 units have similar plans but vary in directional orientation. Six units have the patio on the SW side; four have it on the SE; one on the NE; one on the NW. Eight units have the kitchen wing on the right upon entry into the living room (six of these are on the Playa Sur Avenue side of the alley); the remaining four have that wing on the left. The plan contains a living room which is in the center of the composition. There is no formal place on entry into the unit. To one side is the sleeping wing; containing one bedroom, the bath, and a closet. A very small hall has doorways on all sides, providing access to all the rooms. The bedroom is on the leg which extends to form one side of the patio; the bathroom is in the rear corner; the closet is between the bathroom and living room.

The kitchen is entered from the living room. In the leg opposite the bedroom wing is located a small eating nook. In the rear corner is a porch (enclosed) which has an incinerator backed up to the living room fireplaces. The roof terrace is directly above the living room.

2. Stairways: There are no interior stairways.
3. Flooring: Concrete slab floors throughout.
4. Walls: Exposed interior surface of the concrete walls; plaster partitions. Ceilings of celotex between the joists in the living rooms (celotex left natural color) and exposed sheathing in other areas.
5. Doorways, doors: Plain wood doors in wood frames. Where doors are used, they are two-way swing type.

6. Special decorative features, cabinets: There is built-in furniture in the eating nook (a booth), kitchen cabinets, and furniture were part of the original designs for the kitchen, living room, and bedroom.
7. Hardware: The doors do not have hardware such as latches, knobs, etc. Plain butt hinges used.
8. Mechanical equipment, heating, plumbing: There is a fireplace in each of the living rooms and on the roof terrace. There is an incinerator in the rear porch.

A central gas hot water heater provided hot water to all units. Public showers were in the center of the complex. The bathrooms have basic plumbing fixtures.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting: The site is a sloping parcel of ground close to the shores of the Pacific Ocean. It is situated between two streets (Gravilla on the Southeast, Playa Sur Avenue on the Northwest). A public alley (10' wide) bisects the site, paralleling the two streets. The site measures 150' along Playa Sur Avenue on the NW; 118'-6" from Playa Sur to the alley on the NE and 66'-3" on the SW; 90" from Gravilla to alley and 125' along Gravilla on SE.
2. Landscaping: Walkways cross the site from the streets to the alley. The entire site is densely covered with numerous types of trees, hedges, etc.
3. Outbuildings: There are 12 garages in three buildings opening off the alley. Five garages are on the NW side of the alley at the NE end with four garages opposite them on the SE side of the alley. Connected to this last grouping of garages are the public showers (NE side of the garages) with the hot water heater space next to the garage on the SE side.

Prepared by: Robert C. Giebner
Project Supervisor
HABS Southern California Project II
Summer 1969

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary Sources:

R. M. Schindler report, USC Department of Architecture, for Director of Contemporary Architecture, October 1949.

Original drawings, Schindler Collection, UC Santa Barbara.

Early photographs, Schindler Collection, UC Santa Barbara.

B. Secondary Sources:

Architectural Record, July 1930 (Vol. 68, pp. 17-21).

"R. M. Schindler," E. McCoy, Arts & Architecture, Los Angeles, May 1954.

Five California Architects, E. McCoy, Reinhold, New York, 1960.

A Guide to Architecture in Southern California, Gebhard-Winter, UC Santa Barbara, 1965.

R. M. Schindler, Architect, David Gebhard, UC Santa Barbara, 1967.

Roots of California Contemporary Architecture, Los Angeles Art Commission and the Architectural Panel, 1958.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Southern California Coordinating Committee for Historic Preservation. This is the HABS-Southern California Project II, and was undertaken in 1969.